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Juan Sanchez Arreola, 69, Man Who Wrote to Unabom Suspect



By David Barboza
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Juan Sanchez Arreola, the Mexican farm worker who carried on a seven-year correspondence with Theodore J. Kaczynski, the man accused of being the Unabomber, died Aug. 2 at his home in Ojinaga, Mexico. He was 69.

Word of Mr. Sanchez's death came in a letter to The New York Times received Friday from one of his daughters, Luz Elena Sanchez Garcia. The cause was a stroke, relatives and friends said.

Mr. Sanchez, who had just two years of formal education, corresponded with Mr. Kaczynski, the Harvard-educated former mathematics professor, between 1988 and 1995.

The letters, handwritten in Spanish, ended a few months before Mr. Kaczynski was arrested in April 1996 by Federal authorities, who accused him of carrying out an 18-year string of terrorist bombings.

The unusual friendship began after Theodore Kaczynski's brother, David, was befriended by Mr. Sanchez in the early 1980's, when Mr. Kaczynski moved to the Big Bend area of West Texas. David Kaczynski suggested that Mr. Sanchez write to his older brother, who had studied Spanish.

Theodore Kaczynski soon began a regular correspondence with Mr. Sanchez, who was about 15 years his senior. The letters, on lined, three-ring binder paper, were always addressed to "my very dear and esteemed friend."

Mr. Sanchez said he had received about 50 letters in all, many of them now lost, describing Mr. Kaczynski's reclusive life in a Montana cabin, his difficulties finding a job and hunting rabbit for food, his disappointment at not having a wife and children and his fascination with Pancho Villa, the Mexican revolutionary.

Though the two never met, the correspondence appeared to reflect one of the few sustained relationships Mr. Kaczynski had in the nearly 25 years he lived in Montana.

In interviews after Mr. Kaczynski was arrested, Mr. Sanchez said that he had occasionally offered advice to "Teodoro," who confessed to having strained relations with his family. But late in 1995, Mr. Kaczynski wrote back: "If you want to be my friend, don't give me advice."

Still, Mr. Kaczynski clearly respected and perhaps even idealized Mr. Sanchez, a poor farmhand who struggled through an uneasy existence, dividing his time between Ojinaga, a border town in Mexico, and various Texas ranches.

As a token of their friendship, Mr. Kaczynski even sent a few gifts to Mr. Sanchez's children, including a wooden cylinder, delicately painted and bearing the Latin inscription for "Mountain Men Are Always Free." Although some believe the cylinder, which has a detachable cap, resembles a pipe bomb, the Sanchez children used it as a pencil holder.

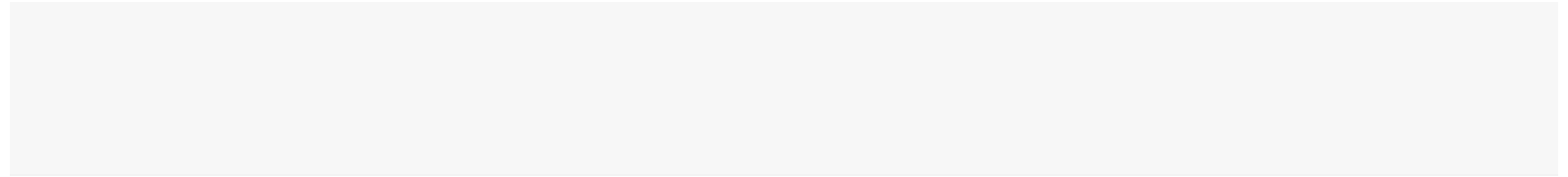
Mr. Sanchez, who led a quiet family life and suffered from emphysema, found himself engulfed in a media blitz after Mr. Kaczynski's arrest. In the months after their correspondence made headlines, friends said that Mr. Sanchez found a new set of pen pals, including correspondents in Peru and Germany. He never, however, heard again from "Teodoro," they said.

David Kaczynski, though, traveled to Ojinaga in August to offer his condolences to the family, said Anthony P. Bisceglie, his lawyer.

Mr. Bisceglie said he informed the lawyers for Theodore Kaczynski of Mr. Sanchez's death shortly after it occurred.

In addition to his daughter Luz Elena, Mr. Sanchez is survived by his wife, Rosario Garcia, his children Jose and Petronila, and three grandchildren, all of Mexico.

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